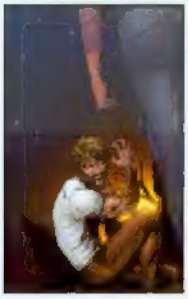
TOP COW
www.topcow.com
JOE'S COMICS
image
8
$2.50 US
JULY
STRACZYNSKI
FRANK
SIBAL
MILLA
DREAMER
J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI'S
MIDNIGHT NATION
OBI

midnight nation
created by j. michael straczynski

"SOMEWHERE BETWEEN NEARLY THERE AND THERE"

cover
gary frank
jonathan sibal
matt milla



Previously:

As David and Laurel cross the country to rescue David's soul and stop his transformation into one of the Walkers, the Man who is holding his soul is trying to persuade him to give in and that Laurel is really his enemy. Laurel's responsibility is to offer him the choice to have her end it now once and for all. All in all, she will offer it to him three times on their journey. Meanwhile, the Walker side of him is growing stronger...

writer
j. michael straczynski

penciler
gary frank

inker
jonathan sibal

colorist
avalon studios'
matt milla

letterers
dreamer design's
robin spehar & dennis heisler

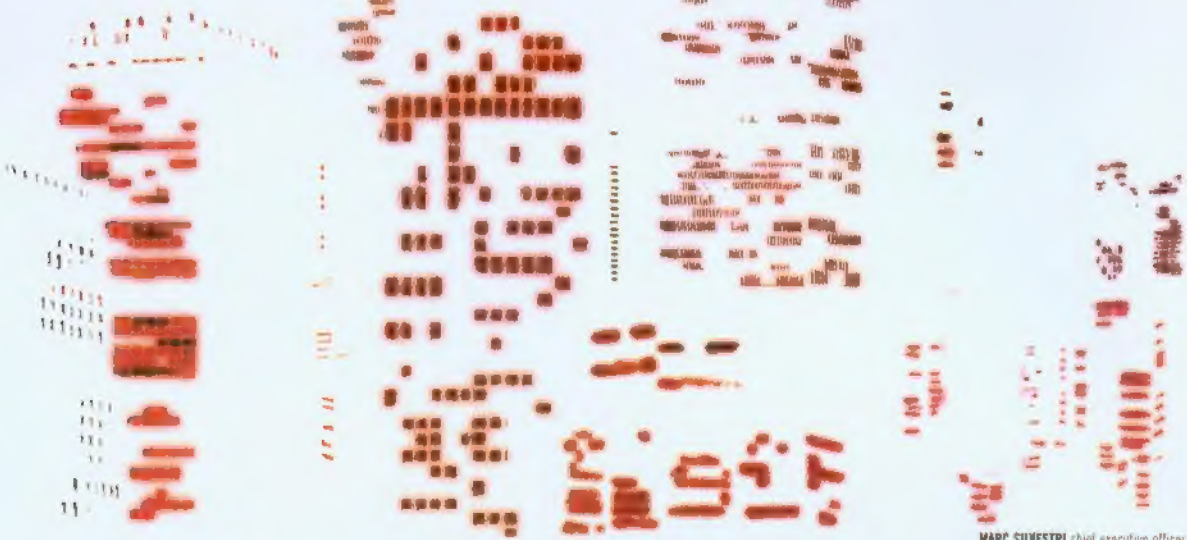
managing editor
renae geerlings

editor in chief
david wohl

design
rafael puffie
peter grizwald

production
nicholas chun
alvin coats

editorial assistants
cj wilson , gabrielle lissauer
& sina grace



TOP COW PRODUCTIONS, INC.

Image COMICS
JIM VALENTINO
publisher

JOE'S COMICS

Address Correspondence to:
Midnight Nation c/o Top Cow Productions Inc.
10390 Santa Monica Blvd. No. 110, Los Angeles, Ca. 90025
E-Mail: midnightnation@topcow.com

for Midnight Nation and Joe's Comics previews, message boards and more go to

www.topcow.com

MARC SILVESTRI chief executive officer
MATT HAWKINS president / chief operating officer
DAVID WOHL president of creative affairs / editor in chief
PETER STEIGERWALD vice president of publishing and design / art director
RENAE GEERLINGS managing editor
FRANK MASTROMAURO director of sales and marketing
NICHOLAS CHUN production manager
VINCE HERNANDEZ direct sales manager
ALVIN COATS special projects coordinator

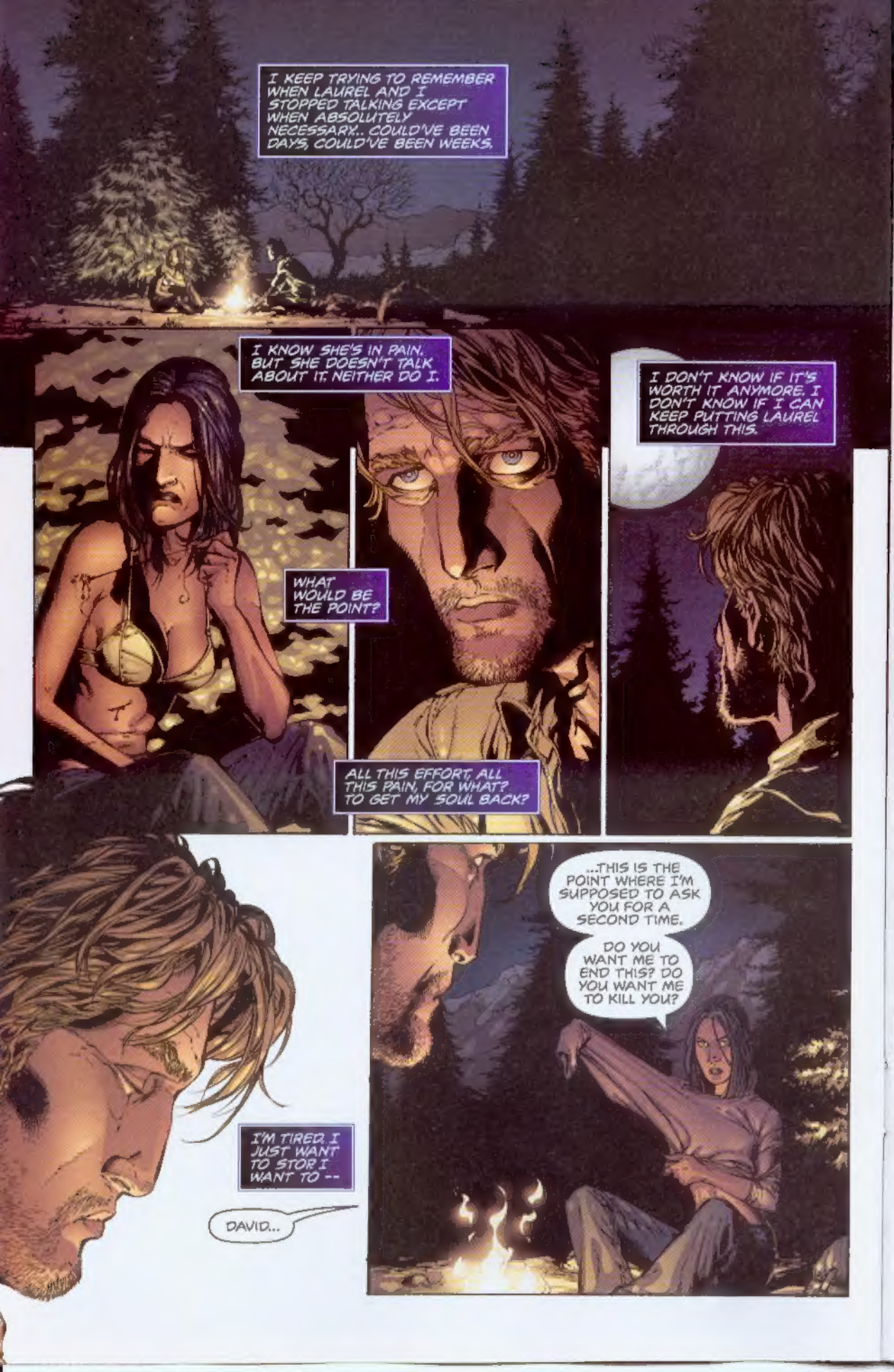
DIRECT SALES
00811
7 09853 07210 2

MIDNIGHT NATION™ Vol. 1, Issue 8, JULY 2001. FIRST PRINTING. Published by Image Comics Inc. Office of Publication: 1071 North Batavia Street Suite A Orange, California 92867. $2.50 US. Midnight Nation™ it's logo, all related characters and their likenesses are ™ & © 2001 J. Michael Straczynski and Top Cow Productions Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

The entire contents of this book are ™ & © 2001 Top Cow Productions Inc. Any similarities to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reprinted in any form without the express written consent of J. Michael Straczynski, Marc Silvestri or Top Cow Productions Inc.

PRINTED IN CANADA

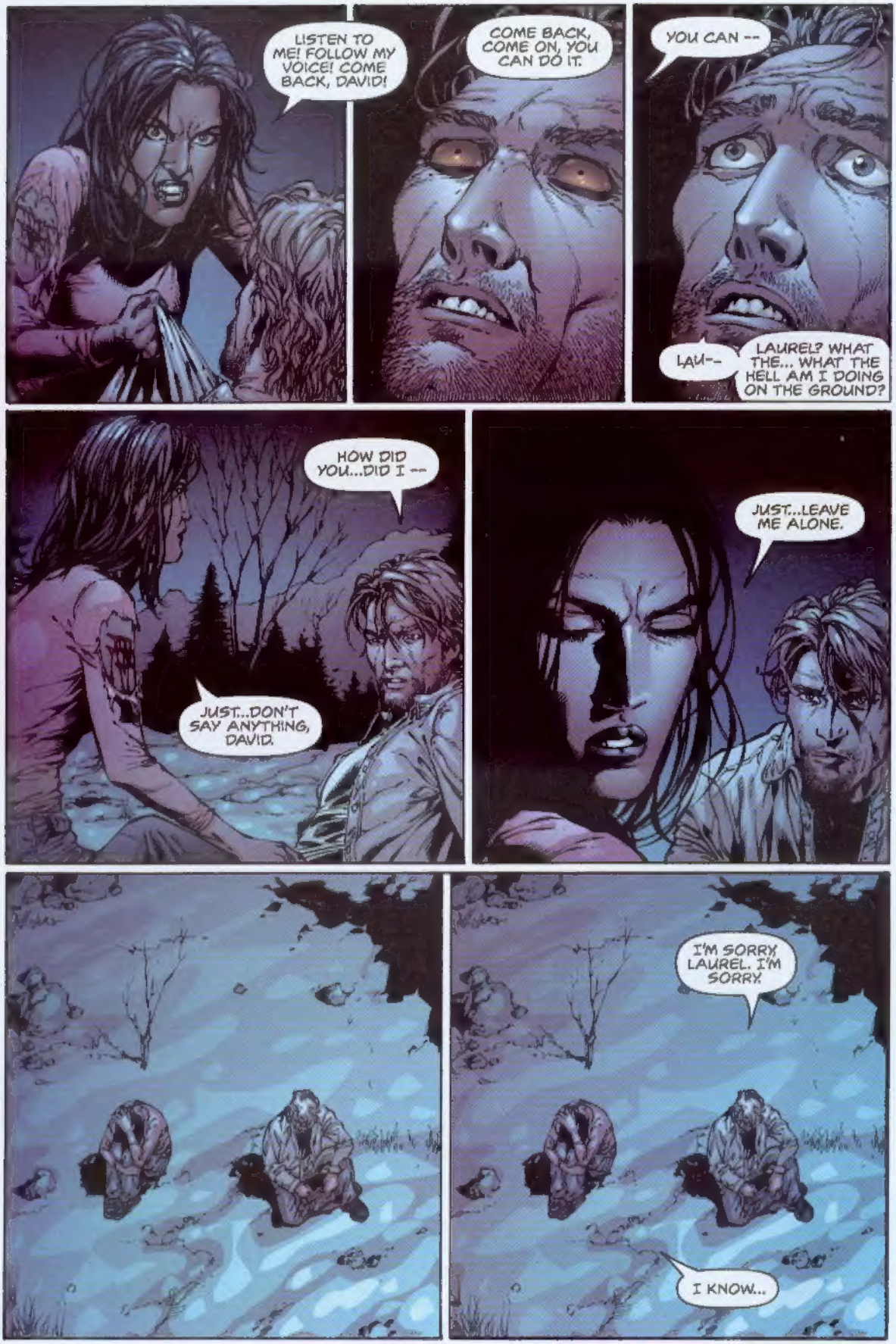
DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS TO WALK FOR TEN MONTHS?
THROUGH HEAT?
THROUGH RAIN?
THROUGH SNOW?
DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS TO BE UNDER CONSTANT ATTACK FOR TEN MONTHS?
NO PEACE.
NO REST.
NO ESCAPE.
YOU CAN'T. YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY.
THE DAYS WEAR, THE NIGHTS BLEED, AND THROUGH THE HAZE I BEGIN TO REALIZE THAT I AM SLOWLY LOSING MY MIND.
INCH BY INCH. CUT BY CUT.


I KEEP TRYING TO REMEMBER WHEN LAUREL AND I STOPPED TALKING EXCEPT WHEN ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY... COULD'VE BEEN DAYS, COULD'VE BEEN WEEKS.
I KNOW SHE'S IN PAIN. BUT SHE DOESN'T TALK ABOUT IT. NEITHER DO I.
WHAT WOULD BE THE POINT?
ALL THIS EFFORT, ALL THIS PAIN, FOR WHAT? TO GET MY SOUL BACK?
I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S WORTH IT ANYMORE. I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN KEEP PUTTING LAUREL THROUGH THIS.
...THIS IS THE POINT WHERE I'M SUPPOSED TO ASK YOU FOR A SECOND TIME.
DO YOU WANT ME TO END THIS? DO YOU WANT ME TO KILL YOU?
I'M TIRED. I JUST WANT TO STOP I WANT TO --
DAVID...

YOU'D LIKE THAT, WOULDN'T YOU?
DAVID--
YOU DON'T THINK I'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES. YOU'D JUST RATHER BE RID OF ME. SO YOU WOULDN'T BE HURT ANY-MORE.
THAT'S NOT FAIR!
SO? WHAT IS? YOU WANNA TALK FAIR? FAIR WAS WHEN I STILL HAD A LIFE! BEFORE ALL THIS CRAP HIT ME OUT OF NOWHERE!
OKAY, CONSIDER ME OUT OF THIS CONVERSATION. YOU WANT TO YELL, GO ON AHEAD, YOU'RE NOT YOURSELF RIGHT NOW, THIS ISN'T YOU, IT'S WHAT YOU'RE BECOMING --
DON'T TURN YOUR BACK ON ME!
YAAAAAAHHHHH!

WHUFF!
GODDAMN IT, DAVID! STOP IT! THIS ISN'T YOU! LISTEN TO ME, LISTEN --
SSSSSSSSSHHHHHH--
--HHHHAAAAAAAHHHH!
DYAHHH! FAAAHHH!
UNGH!

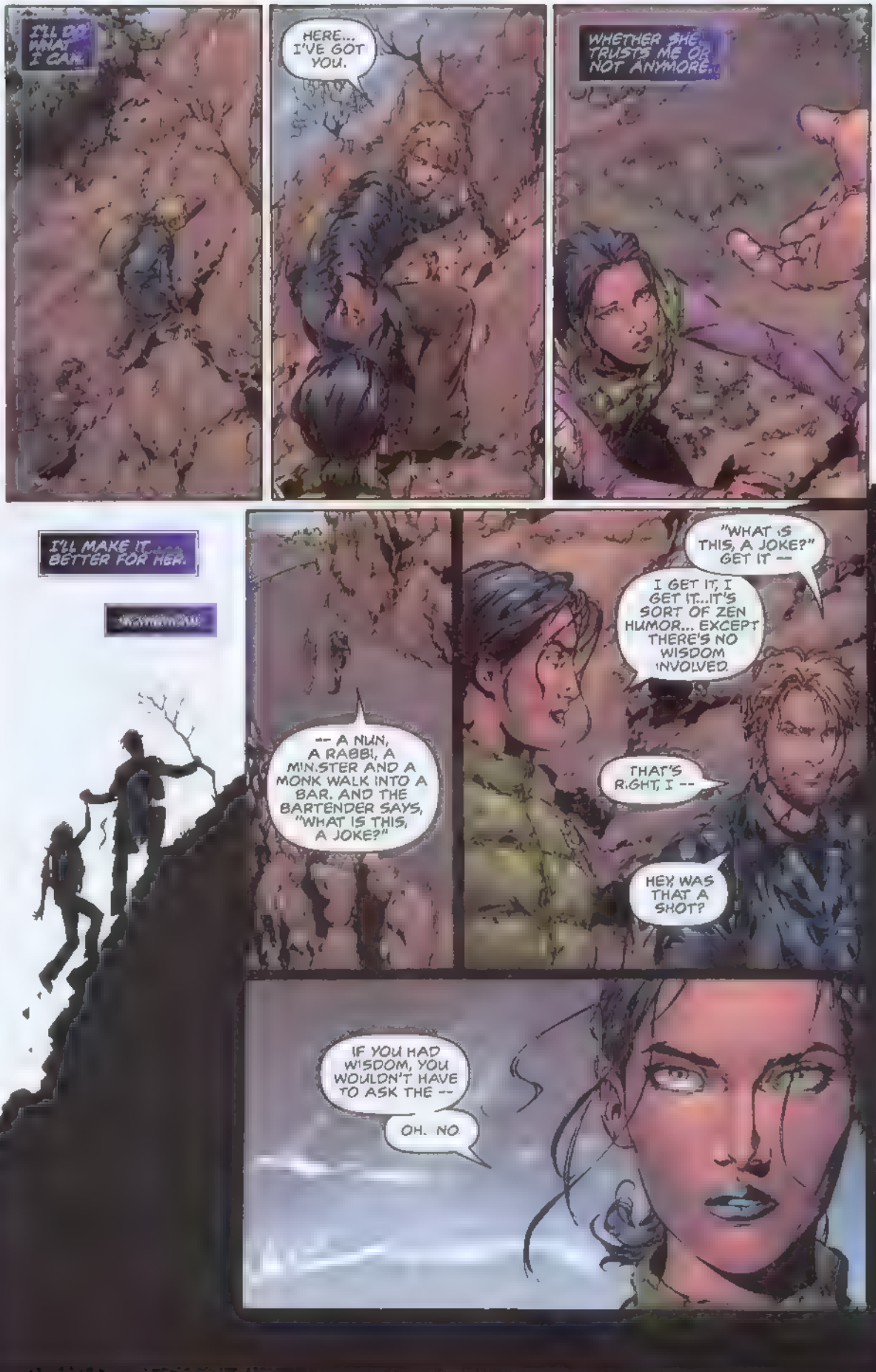
AGGGH!
...ENOUGH...
...I SAID THAT'S --
-- ENOUGH!


LISTEN TO ME! FOLLOW MY VOICE! COME BACK, DAVID!
COME BACK, COME ON, YOU CAN DO IT.
YOU CAN --
LAU--
LAUREL? WHAT THE... WHAT THE HELL AM I DOING ON THE GROUND?
HOW DID YOU...DID I --
JUST...DON'T SAY ANYTHING, DAVID.
JUST...LEAVE ME ALONE.
I'M SORRY LAUREL. I'M SORRY.
I KNOW...

WE DON'T TALK THE REST OF THE NIGHT. I COULD SHOOT MYSELF FOR WHAT HAPPENED. I BARELY EVEN REMEMBER...
I CAN'T STAND HURTING HER. BUT EVERY NIGHT IT GETS HARDER TO AVOID BECOMING... ONE OF THEM.
YOU KNOW, I WAS THINKING... YOU DON'T ACTUALLY HAVE TO GO THE REST OF THE WAY WITH ME. I MEAN, I KNOW WHERE NEW YORK IS FROM HERE, WE CAN'T BE MORE THAN ANOTHER WEEK AWAY.. I COULD GO ALONE --
NO. IT'S NOT ALLOWED.
BESIDES, YOU COULD HAVE ONE OF THOSE... EPISODES... AND NOT WORK YOUR WAY BACK. AT LEAST I CAN RECALL YOU FROM THE MADNESS WHEN IT HITS.
AT LEAST FOR A LITTLE WHILE LONGER.
I WAS THINKING ABOUT WHEN WE'RE DONE, WHETHER THIS WORKS OR NOT...
YOU SAID YOU ESCORT PEOPLE LIKE ME TO THE END OF THE JOURNEY. YOU CAN'T BE ON THE JOB ALL THE TIME. SO WHAT DO YOU DO, YOU KNOW, IN-BETWEEN?
IN-BETWEEN...?
I'M...AT PEACE.
BUT UNFULFILLED. EMPTY. WAITING.

I DON'T WANT TO WAIT, BUT I DO. I DON'T WANT TO STAY, BUT I DO. I DON'T WANT TO GO, BUT I DO.
I'M IN-BETWEEN.
BUT IT'S BETTER THAN THE PAIN.
LAUREL...
WHO ARE YOU, REALLY?
WHAT ARE YOU?
I'M SOMETHING... YOU COULD NEVER UNDERSTAND, DAVID.
AND I'M VERY, VERY OLD.
AND I'M VERY, VERY, VERY TIRED OF WALKING.
SO LET'S WALK.

AT NIGHT, I WATCH HER FACE AS SHE SLEEPS. WHEN SHE FIRST SHOWED UP SHE SMILED ALL THE TIME. SHE LAUGHED.
SHE DOESN'T LAUGH ANYMORE. HARDLY EVER SMILES ANYMORE. BEING IN MY COMPANY CAUSES HER PAIN.
AND I THINK...HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM ANY OF MY OTHER RELATIONSHIPS? IT SEEMS LIKE ALL I EVER BROUGHT ANY OF THEM WAS PAIN.
BUT THIS IS DIFFERENT. I CAN'T STAND THE IDEA OF CAUSING HER PAIN. SO I'M GOING TO WORK HARDER NOT TO.
BECAUSE I HAVE TO. BECAUSE SHE DESERVES BETTER.
AND BECAUSE I THINK I'M IN LOVE WITH HER.


I'LL DO WHAT I CAN.
HERE... I'VE GOT YOU.
WHETHER SHE TRUSTS ME OR NOT ANYMORE.
I'LL MAKE IT... BETTER FOR HER.
-- A NUN, A RABBI, A MIN.STER AND A MONK WALK INTO A BAR. AND THE BARTENDER SAYS, "WHAT IS THIS, A JOKE?"
"WHAT IS THIS, A JOKE?" GET IT --
I GET IT, I GET IT...IT'S SORT OF ZEN HUMOR... EXCEPT THERE'S NO WISDOM INVOLVED.
THAT'S RIGHT, I --
HEY WAS THAT A SHOT?
IF YOU HAD WISDOM, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO ASK THE --
OH. NO

WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?
IT'S THE GAUNTLET. IT MEANS WE'RE ALMOST THERE.
WE CAN GO BACK THE OTHER WAY, GO AROUND THEM --
IF WE DO THAT, WE'LL LOSE TIME WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE.
YOU HAVE TO TAKE THEM ONE AT A TIME. EACH ONE IS A HARD FIGHT, AND EACH ONE WILL HURT YOU.
AT SOME POINT, YOU'LL HAVE TO DECIDE WHEN YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH, AND WANT ME TO TAKE OVER, AND SPELL YOU FOR A WHILE.
EVEN THOUGH IT'LL HURT YOU?
YES. EVEN THOUGH IT'LL HURT ME.
NO FREAKING WAY. I CAN HANDLE THIS. I'M NOT CALLING YOU IN. I CAN DO IT.

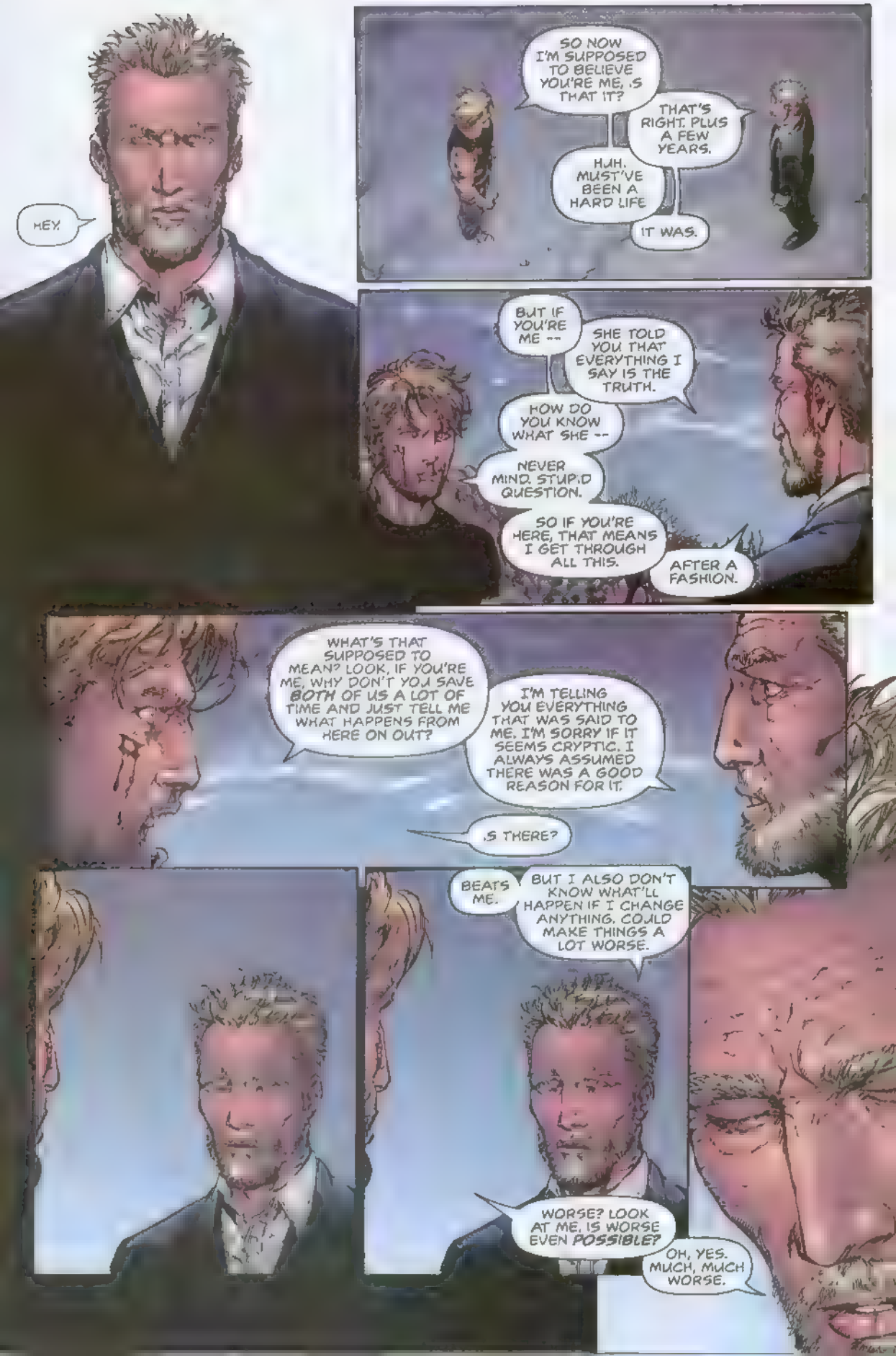
DAVID, THIS ISN'T GOOD.. LOOK AT YOU. I CAN --
NO...I CAN DO IT...
I CAN DO IT

LAUREL ..
.T'S ALL RIGHT...
I'M SORRY.

-- HUCCCHHH... GOD DAMN... HURK...
THAT WAS BAD.
THAT WAS REAL BAD...
BUT IT'S NOT THE WORST OF IT.
IT'S NOT? WHAT THE HELL COULD BE WORSE THAN THAT?
TAKE A LOOK.

SO WHO THE HELL IS THAT?
SOMEONE YOU HAVE TO TALK TO.
WHAT IF I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT?
YOU HAVE TO. HE'S ON THE ROAD BETWEEN HERE AND THERE. YOU CAN'T GET THERE UNTIL YOU TALK TO H.M.
FINE. TERRIFIC. YOU WANT ME TO TALK TO HIM, I'LL TALK TO HIM. AFTER ALL THAT, HOW BAD CAN IT BE? I'LL --
I'LL...BE OVER THERE.
WHAT? BUT I THOUGHT --
COME BACK WHEN YOU'RE DONE. I'LL BE WA.TING.
BUT..I MEAN, DON'T YOU WANT TO --
NO.
I DON'T BELIEVE .T. YOU'RE AFRAID OF THIS GUY. I CAN HEAR .T IN YOUR VOICE. YOU JUST FOUGHT TEN GAZILLION WALKERS AND YOU'RE AFRAID OF HIM? WHY?
LAUREL?
LAUREL, WHO IS THIS GUY?
YOU HAVE TO SEE FOR YOURSELF. BUT ONE TH.NG.
THIS IS IMPORTANT, DAVID, SO LISTEN CAREFULLY.
WHAT HE IS GO.NG TO TELL YOU .S THE TRUTH. IT'S NOT A TRICK. .T'S NOT A RIDDLE OR A METAPHOR OR A GAG OR MISDIRECTION. IT'S THE TRUTH.
HOW DO YOU KNOW .T'S THE TRUTH?
YOU FORGET, DAVID.
...I'VE BEEN DOWN THIS ROAD BEFORE.

SH T..
SO MANY, MANY, MANY TIMES BEFORE.
...GIVE ME A BREAK

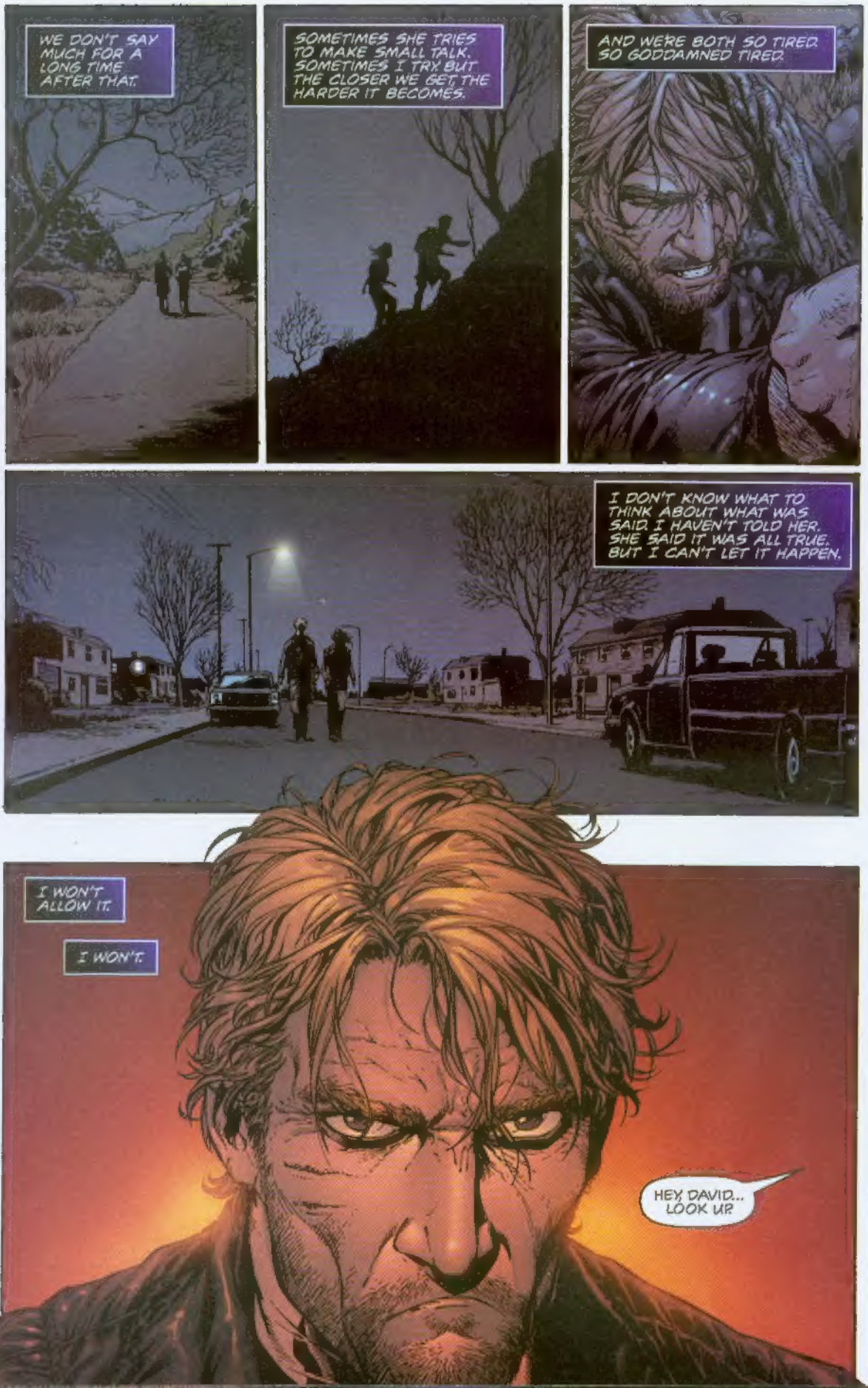

HEY.
SO NOW I'M SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE YOU'RE ME, .S THAT IT?
THAT'S RIGHT. PLUS A FEW YEARS.
HUH. MUST'VE BEEN A HARD LIFE
IT WAS.
BUT IF YOU'RE ME --
SHE TOLD YOU THAT EVERYTHING I SAY IS THE TRUTH.
HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT SHE --
NEVER MIND. STUPID QUESTION.
SO IF YOU'RE HERE, THAT MEANS I GET THROUGH ALL THIS.
AFTER A FASHION.
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN? LOOK, IF YOU'RE ME, WHY DON'T YOU SAVE BOTH OF US A LOT OF TIME AND JUST TELL ME WHAT HAPPENS FROM HERE ON OUT?
I'M TELLING YOU EVERYTHING THAT WAS SAID TO ME. I'M SORRY IF IT SEEMS CRYPTIC. I ALWAYS ASSUMED THERE WAS A GOOD REASON FOR IT.
.S THERE?
BEATS ME.
BUT I ALSO DON'T KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN IF I CHANGE ANYTHING. COULD MAKE THINGS A LOT WORSE.
WORSE? LOOK AT ME. IS WORSE EVEN POSSIBLE?
OH, YES. MUCH, MUCH WORSE.

SHE'S IN THERE, ISN'T SHE?
LAUREL I MEAN.
YEAH...OF COURSE SHE'S IN THERE.
LOOK, CAN I JUST GET ONE STRAIGHT ANSWER HERE? I MEAN, WHAT THE HELL'S THE PO NT OF HAVING THIS CONVERSATION OTHERWISE?
SIMPLE QUEST ON. SIMPLE ANSWER WHAT D'YOU SAY? WANNA PLAY?
SURE. GO AHEAD. SIMPLE QUEST.ONS. SIMPLE ANSWERS.
AND THIS IS ALL THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH, RIGHT?
THAT'S WHAT SHE SA D SHE NEVER SA D ANYTH NG SHE D DN'T MEAN.
OKAY. SO. DO I. I MEAN...
DO I GET MY SOUL BACK?
NO.

NO? WHAT DO YOU MEAN, NO? LAUREL SAID IF I DON'T GET MY SOUL BACK, I TURN INTO A WALKER, TRAPPED BETWEEN THE TWO WORLDS.
THAT'S RIGHT.
YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE A WALKER.
FUNNY, ISN'T IT?
I SHOULD GO NOW. MY TIME HERE IS ALMOST UP.
WAIT A MINUTE...YOU CAN'T JUST LEAVE LIKE THIS --
I CAN. I AM. I DID.
SO LONG AGO.
ANYWAY, GOOD LUCK, I --
WAIT!
WHAT ABOUT... I MEAN, YOU'D KNOW, RIGHT? YOU'VE ALREADY BEEN THROUGH ALL THIS. YOU'D...
WHAT ABOUT LAUREL? WHAT HAPPENS TO LAUREL?

SHE DIES.
BUT THAT'S NOT...I MEAN, SHE'S TOUGH, YOU KNOW? SHE'S...
HOW?
SHE DIES.
WE KILL HER AFTER WE GET TO NEW YORK.
...WE KILL HER.

FINISHED?
YEAH...YEAH, HE...WE'RE FINISHED.
GOOD. WE NEED TO GET BACK ON THE ROAD. WE DON'T HAVE A LOT OF TIME.
NO...I GUESS WE DON'T...
I DIDN'T GET TO FINISH ASKING YOU BEFORE...
KNOWING WHAT'S COMING. KNOWING WHAT YOU MAY BECOME. DO YOU WANT ME TO END THIS FOR YOU NOW?
LAUREL, I --
DO YOU?
LAUREL, I JUST...I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW...I KNOW WE FIGHT SOMETIMES, I KNOW IT'S BEEN HARD FOR BOTH OF US, BUT I --
I CARE FOR YOU, LAUREL. I CARE FOR YOU MORE THAN I'VE EVER CARED FOR ANYONE IN MY ENTIRE LIFE. I --
DO YOU --
-- DO YOU WANT ME TO END THIS FOR YOU?
NO.


WE DON'T SAY MUCH FOR A LONG TIME AFTER THAT.
SOMETIMES SHE TRIES TO MAKE SMALL TALK. SOMETIMES I TRY BUT THE CLOSER WE GET, THE HARDER IT BECOMES.
AND WE'RE BOTH SO TIRED. SO GODDAMNED TIRED.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK ABOUT WHAT WAS SAID. I HAVEN'T TOLD HER. SHE SAID IT WAS ALL TRUE. BUT I CAN'T LET IT HAPPEN.
I WON'T ALLOW IT.
I WON'T.
HEY, DAVID... LOOK UP.

LCOME TO
EW YORK
JOY YOUR
STAY!
WE'RE HERE.
TO BE CONTINUED.